



TV Pilot: XXXXX  
Scores & Academy Analysis

Analyst: C. Brewington

Screenplay Title: XXXXX

Genre: Comedy

Category: TV Half-hour

The following scores and comments are objectively presented and intended to be illustrative, instructive, and helpful in guiding the writer along a professional path. Scores and comments are in accordance with current professional film and television industry standards.

**Scores/Comments:**

**Concept/Originality: 6**

As a situational comedy with a female lead, some of the strength of this concept lies in the appeal it would have in the marketplace. There still aren't a lot of comedies on television with a female protagonist, so this automatically helps the script stand out. The concept also has great specificity, which is rather helpful for situation comedies. From the setting in Silicon Valley, to Rachael and her husband's careers, it helps the show have a fresh take and specific perspective on the everyday life of a modern woman. That said, the specificity of the concept could be exhibited more in the story. What is it like living in Silicon Valley, especially as a family that's not part of the tech industry? What factors are

contributing to why her bakery is struggling (the script touches on one or two, but could go deeper)? Does Rachael also have an interest in being a standup comedian? Because the show is based on the writer, the reader thought standup comedy might end up playing more into the episode. Although the end does include Rachael expressing an interest in comedy, if it is an important part of the concept and her character, the writer may want to consider adding more of this element into the pilot.

#### **Structure: 4**

While the script has a somewhat defined beginning, middle, and end, the structure within each section could be stronger. It's great that the beginning establishes the status quo of Rachael and her family, particularly regarding her financial situation, and it shows her place of work, essentially displaying the core elements of the concept. The placement of the inciting incident is almost there, as it starts to get introduced on page 5 when Jenny says, "I've got something I need to tell you." However, due to banter and meeting other characters working in the bakery, Jenny doesn't fully reveal the inciting incident until page 10. Because this is a half-hour show, if the inciting incident can happen sooner, that's ideal. As for the end, Rachael finally getting to relax with her family at the end of the day puts a nice button on the episode, but everything resolves itself with the cookie fiasco a little too quickly. The middle of the script (pages 10-34) needs the most work in terms of structure, as the three storylines (the cookie order, Daniel's head injury, and picking up Alice from 7/11) have a hard time blending, so the story seems a bit scattered.

#### **Plot/Story: 4**

To continue the point above, the plot would greatly benefit if the three storylines were more cohesive. It's understandable that part of the story and the comedy is how chaotic Rachael's life is and the antics she must deal with as she works to keep up her business. This doesn't need to go away, but with the way its currently structured, it's hard at times to follow the flow and logic of the narrative. One storyline feels disrupted by another, rather than having a thematic or narrative connection. One strategy that might solve this issue would be to create little fires in each storyline that Rachael must put out.

For example, Rachael reminds Brad there's a rusty nail in the fence that needs to be removed, then heads off to work. She gets the cookie order, but before anyone can start, they realize the eggs have gone bad and they must buy new ones. She brings the eggs back to the bakery but just as she's about to start helping, she gets a call from Brad about Daniel hurting himself on the rusty nail he didn't take care of. So, just as Rachael is putting out one fire and everything is about to settle, another fire disrupts her. This is just an example to show a way of taking these plot points and tying them closer together narratively so that the story flows easier. This does happen a bit with Brad's task of paying the utility bill. He's tasked with it, forgets about it, and in the end, it comes back to bite them when the lights turn off. Interweaving the storylines like this also helps give each one equal focus, so that one doesn't take up so much time that the others are forgotten. This happened somewhat once the story started focusing on Daniel's injury; it takes up almost ten pages, and in that time the reader almost forgot about the cookie order situation.

### **Pacing: 5**

The language of the script is easy to read and it is an appropriate length for a half-hour comedy. The script is a little dialogue-heavy, which doesn't necessarily slow down pacing in and of itself, but it can when paired with action lines that need clarification. At times it's difficult to visually picture what is happening in a scene based on the action lines. For example, on page 35 the reader had trouble picturing the sequence of actions taking place as Rachael struggled to get the cookies into the building and spills them. These are some questions the reader had as they went through the scene:

- “Jenny steps out to greet Rachael...” Steps out from where? Is this meant to say MaraLee?
- “The door swings shut. Locked.” What door is swinging shut and who is opening it?
- “Rachael yells out to MaraLee...” Is she no longer at the entrance door with the cart?

- Did Jenny catch the door to leave it open after MaraLee walked out then walked back inside?

There are a couple scenes like this where it's not entirely clear what's happening in the action, requiring the reader to backtrack, and reread to figure it out, which means pacing is affected. Of course, this scene would be clearer on film, but it's important the action on the page is clear too, so anyone filming it understands what's supposed to happen.

### **Characters: 5**

All the characters have detailed descriptions, and some are rather funny, such as Pugly's. What makes this one stand out the most is that it's written with the same kind of humor as the tone of the show. The writer is encouraged to incorporate that more when describing some of the other characters. Some character descriptions need a little more clarification because although they might possess an interesting, specific quality, it's not entirely clear what that quality means, such as this portion of Brad's description: his creed, happy wife, happy life, but watered down. What does "watered down" mean? There are also times when the character descriptions appear long after the character is first introduced/mentioned in the story (i.e., Uncle Allan and Stacy), which can lead to some confusion.

In the editing process, it's suggested the writer work on fleshing out and clarifying Rachael first, as she's the protagonist and will therefore receive the most attention. Here are some questions to consider: What does the audience learn about Rachael *as a person* by the end of the episode, other than her sarcastic wit? How does she change from the beginning to the end, or what lesson does she learn by the end? Is there a way of *showing* the audience that she's exhausted from having two kids, a business, and a husband, without having her explicitly state it? Does she love Brad, or is she at the end of her rope with this marriage? To that point, for most of the script, the latter seems to be true, so that might need to be reworked if that's not the case.

## **Dialogue: 4**

Something the dialogue does well is delivering as advertised on Rachael's biting sense of humor. She certainly knows how to take someone down a peg with her words. That said, it would be nice to see other facets of her personality through her dialogue, perhaps a softer side, which does happen a bit at the end when she's relaxing with her family. There are some moments when the dialogue could sound more natural; one thing that might help this is considering the relationships between characters and how that might affect the way they phrase something. So, if Rachael is talking to her sister-in-law, she probably wouldn't refer to Daniel as "our son Daniel." It's a small note but it helps the dialogue sound more natural. The main note for improvement here is clarity: sometimes it's hard to follow the logic of a conversation between characters. This happens especially when Rachael is on the phone with someone. The reader had a hard time figuring out what the issue was with the client that called about the violet cookies. Clarity will also help some of the jokes land better. On page 5, for example, the joke of "is that dog still alive," got lost because there was no indication that Jenny was distracted by this ailing dog so much that she would interrupt telling Rachael about this important cookie order to ask about him.

## **Tone: 5**

There are some great comedic moments and dialogue; Maria and Alice stand out as funny characters. Alice comes across as a combination of both Grace and Frankie from *Grace and Frankie*, and the reader got a great sense of the type of humor she brings to a scene. Sometimes Rachael's sardonic sense of humor and jokes land, but sometimes they seem a bit overly scathing, particularly when she talks about Brad. It's not entirely clear how absurdist the comedy is supposed to be; it feels like this script wants to ride the line between realism and absurdism, sort of in the way *Arrested Development* does, but it's not quite hitting that mark yet.

#### **Conflict: 4**

Rachael is given a clear conflict with a specific time limit early in the story, which is great for giving her an active objective and keeping the stakes high. The audience knows that her business is barely staying afloat, so she desperately needs the money from this order. However, once this is established, that desperation disappears as other storylines take over the plot, and not much time is spent dealing with this problem. As mentioned above, it almost seems forgotten about for awhile until Rachael brings the family to the bakery to help get the order together, and with that, the issue is resolved rather easily. Even Rachael dropping some of the cookies at the venue is nothing more than a minor hiccup. This is comedy, so keeping the conflict light-hearted is fine, but ideally it should still have a level of urgency to the protagonist and be the main element driving the plot.

#### **Emotional Response/Investment: 4**

The potential for emotional investment in this show would increase with some adjustments to the *Plot*, *Character*, and *Conflict* elements. While Rachael's situation is relatable to a modern audience, they need to know more about her, her flaws, her fears, her passions, to feel more connected to her. Same goes for all the other characters; as of now, the audience gets to know them on a surface level, but they need a bit more complexity to feel like fully formed people. Situational comedies aren't necessarily plot-driven, so it's important that the characters really draw people in, as that is what will keep the audience coming back week to week.

#### **Marketplace Potential: 4**

A situational comedy focused on the work/life balance of a woman struggling to keep her business afloat is relatable content. There are many women in America struggling with similar issues who might enjoy having their struggles recognized in a humorous way. Therefore, adult women, ages 25+, would likely be the core demographic for this show. The concept is certainly marketable, the story of the pilot and character development

need some clarification and fleshing out, as after the concept, these would be the main selling points of the script.

**Strengths:**

- A marketable concept with a fresh take on the struggles of the modern woman
- There are some good moments of comedy that highlight the writer's specific sense of humor
- The script is a good length for a half-hour comedy

**Weaknesses:**

- The plot is a bit scattered and difficult to follow at times
- The characters, particularly the protagonist, need more development and complexity
- The story loses track of the main conflict

**Final Comments:**

The first thing the writer may want to consider when it comes to revision is clarity. Does it make sense in the way that one scene leads to another? Is it easy to follow the flow of a conversation between characters? Are the action lines clearly stating what will be seen on film? The concept is strong, but the clarity of the story needs to be just as strong so that it's easy to tell what a typical episode of this show will be like. The writer has the wonderful advantage of being able to pull inspiration from their own life, so the more they do that, the more complex and engaging these characters will be, which will certainly increase the script's chance of success.